Freedom Watch™

Citizens Project

THIS MONTH

- Urban League Study uncovers racial inequities in CS
- Participate in school board elections
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Insider's look at the National Religious Leaders Roundtable

INSIDE CP

District 11 School Board Candidate Debate

Tuesday, October 19th
Coronado High School
(1590 W. Filmore)
7:00 p.m.

Colo. Springs In Black and White: An Urban League Report

by Therese Seibert — Assistant Professor of Sociology, Keene State College

Despite African American progress since the Civil Rights Movement, race inequality in the United States is pervasive. Consider the following statistics:

• In 1998, a White over the age of 25 is much more likely to graduate from college (25.0 percent) than a comparable Black (14.7percent).

• Median personal income for Whites in 1997 ($26,115) was notably higher than for Blacks ($18,096).

• In 1997, the Black poverty rate (26.5 percent) was over double that for Whites (11.0 percent).

• While African Americans comprised 12.8 percent of the population in 1997, they accounted for slightly over 30 percent of all arrests.

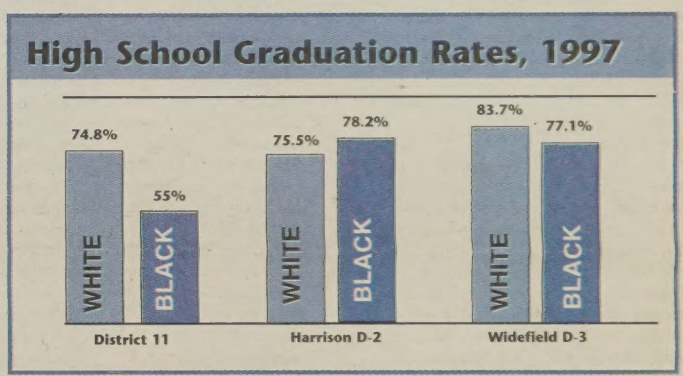
CC Students Conduct Study

In the spring of 1997, sociology students at The Colorado College (CC) began a study to examine race inequality in Colorado Springs. If a race gap existed, they wanted to document the findings and share them through the local Urban League with citizens of Colorado Springs.

Jerome Page, President and CEO of the Urban League of the Pikes Peak Region, had contacted Charles Gallagher, then assistant professor of sociology, about having CC students investigate race inequality in Colorado Springs. Professor Gallagher divided his Racial Inequality class into groups to study specific areas: education, occupation, income, housing, and criminal justice. The following spring semester (1998) a new group of CC students in my Racial Inequality class continued the study.

Education

Students collected 1996-1997 data on graduation rates, dropout rates, and the student-teacher racial composition of each school district in the greater Colorado Springs area. Several findings on graduation rates are noteworthy. For example,



• Black students in the Colorado Springs School District 11 have a substantially lower 1997 graduation rate (55 percent) than White students (74.8 percent). District 11 is the largest school district in Colorado Springs with about 33, 000 students.

• The graduation rates for Blacks and Whites in Widefield District 3 are both higher and less disparate (77.1 and 83.7 percent respectively) than in D 11.

• In Harrison District 2, where 26.7 percent of students are African American, the graduation rate favors Black students (78.2 to 75.5 percent).

The 1990 census revealed that citywide, the percent of citizens over 25 years old who had graduated from high school was similar for Whites (89.1) and Blacks (86.6). However, the percent of Whites over 25 who graduated from college (29.3) was nearly double the percent of Blacks (16.3).

Interestingly, Black and White student dropout rates did not differ significantly within any school district. (Dropout rate refers to the percent of all students enrolled in grades 7-12 who left school during an academic year.) For example,

• D11 has the highest dropout rates with 5.0 (Blacks) and 3.7 (White) percent for the 1996-97 school year.

• The rates for D2 are 4.0 (Blacks) and 3.7 (White) percent.

• The dropout rate in D3 was the same for both groups: 2.3 percent.

In contrast, when CC students examined the ratio of minority teachers to students, they found African American teachers dramatically underrepresented in every school district. Black students make up almost 27 percent of the student body in Harrison D2, yet only about 6 percent of its teachers are Black. Similarly, in D11, 9 percent of the students are African American compared with 4.6 percent of its teachers.

Occupation and Income

Racial disparity in education likely leads to income and occupational inequality. Indeed, CC students found that locally 33.2 percent of White employees worked in either managerial or professional occupations in 1990 compared with 19.9 percent of Black employees. In contrast, 28.5 percent of Black workers were employed in service occupations, while only 13.4 percent of White workers occupied these positions. Even more telling is the fact that the 1990 unemployment rate for Blacks (13.6) was double the rate for Whites (6.5).

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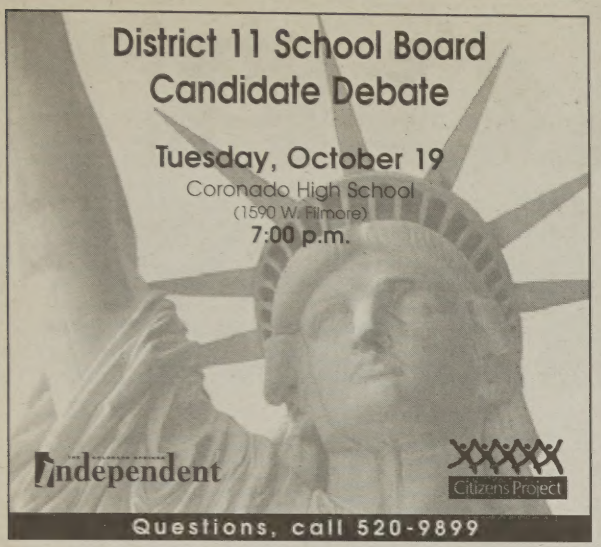

'Urban League' continued from page 1

Given higher unemployment and lower occupational attainment among African Americans, it is no surprise that race income inequality exists in Colorado Springs. The Colorado Springs median income in 1989 of $22,542 for Black families was 62.8 percent of that for White families, $35,897. An even wider gap emerges with family poverty rates: the ratio of Black poverty (17.7 percent) in 1989 was over twice that for Whites (6.9 percent).

Housing

Sociologists use the Index of Dissimilarity (ranging from 0 to 100) to measure residential segregation in a city. The index indicates the percent of Whites or Blacks that would need to move from one area of the city to another for the racial composition of neighborhoods to reflect the racial composition of the entire city. The 1990 Index of Dissimilarity for Colorado Springs (44) was much lower than for several of our nation's largest cities: e.g., Chicago (86), Los Angeles (73), and New York City (82).

Despite relatively low segregation, Colorado Springs has minority concentrations that correlate with lower income. For example, in 1990 median household income for the Hillside neighborhood ($15,186) was about half that for the city ($28,883), and 30 percent of Hillside residents were African American. At the same time, not a single African American lived in the wealthy neighborhoods of Cedar Heights ($61,836) or Upper Skyway ($54,429).

Minority concentration in low-income neighborhoods may be due, in part, to race discrimination among housing lenders. To illustrate, Whites earning $10,5000-$30,499 in 1995 were denied housing loans 17.4 percent of the time, while Blacks earning much higher incomes ($30,500-$50,499) were denied loans at a slightly higher rate of 17.6 percent. As an ethnic minority commented in a public meeting held at the Red Cross Shelter on local housing, "you call a particular apartment complex, and they'll say they have a room unit available. When you get there, the unit is no longer available."

Lack of affordable housing is another problem exacerbated by urban renewal projects, such as the Lowell Project, during the 1980s, in the South Downtown District. This project, targeting a low-income neighborhood that was home to Blacks, Latinos, and Whites, led to the closing of two schools and the decline of its community atmosphere. Many residents sold their houses, now vacant and boarded up, to an out-of-state developer only to find that alternative low-income housing was not available.

Even affordable rental units are scarce in Colorado Springs. Of the 3,270 new apartment units completed from 1989 to 1997, only 460 were "affordable" – housing that costs less than 30 percent of household income.

Law Enforcement

Blatant signs of racial inequality can be found within local law enforcement, most often beginning with racial profiling which may be occurring in the Springs. Of all juveniles stopped by police officers in 1995, 20 percent were African American and 24 percent were Hispanic. A local public defender explained, "Most examples of racism within the judicial system are at the law enforcement level. Those always start out as routine traffic stops, then almost always expand into, 'do you mind if I search your car?' I think that cops are stopping people because of how they look."

While 7 percent of the local population was Black in 1990, a much higher percent of those arrested were Black.

Of all Colorado Springs adults arrested in 1990, 21.7 percent were African American; 17.7 percent of all juveniles arrested were African American.

Black arrests accounted for almost 31 percent of adults and juveniles arrested for aggravated assault in 1990, the most-often committed violent crime in 1990.

Blacks accounted for an even higher percentage of those arrested for all other violent crimes, excluding murder and manslaughter; for example, 37.7 percent of adult robberies and 48.6 percent of juvenile robberies.

Black adults make up 23 percent of those arrested for larceny/theft, the most frequently committed property crime.

Of all adults arrested for possession of narcotics, 29.7 percent were Black.

A Call for Action

CC students realized that their research was only a beginning. In particular they were conscious that many of the statistics available were based on the 1990 Census, though, where possible, they used current statistics. They hoped that their work would continue, with the statistics updated from 2000 census data. More importantly, students want this study to ignite community action to reduce racial inequality in the Springs.

Page of the Urban League reports that indeed this study is only the beginning. Plans are in the making, in concert with several professors at the United States Air Force Academy, the Colorado College, the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs Community Development Department and Pikes Peak Community College to expand the 2000 report using as a basis this first effort. While this current effort concentrates more on African Americans, the Urban League hopes to expand it to include other minority groups and be a truly wide-based racial-gap study which establishes benchmarks for what must be done in Colorado Springs to address the continuing problem of racial inequality. This has taken on particular importance in the light of a five-year national grant made to the local Urban League by the National Urban League and the Lilly Endowment, much of which is to support an expanded data collection and documentation program as relates to minority education.

School board elections need wider community participation

A word from board chair, Richard Conway

Local school board elections will be held on Tuesday, November 2nd. This is an important election for residents who are concerned about the political and social climate of this community regardless of whether or not they have children. School boards play a major role in defining a city's intellectual landscape by creating policies relating to what and how children will learn. Consequently, the school board candidates we elect will ultimately affect how well prepared today's youth will be for the challenges of the future and their roles as tomorrow's leaders.

This is not to imply that schools are or should be the only source of information for our children. Ideally, the knowledge and life experiences of parents and other adults will be integrally woven into what children learn during their youth. But school boards do set the tone for what children are taught in school and this is undoubtedly where most young people receive the majority of their formal learning.

In recent years, public schools have become battlegrounds for issues relating to diversity and religion. In neighboring Kansas, the theory of evolution has been deemed inappropriate to teach. National and state legislators have made multiple calls for posting the Ten Commandments to be posted in public schools. The religious right has been working for years to influence public learning, by electing candidates to school boards throughout the country, and blurring the lines of separation between church and state. We are now seeing the results of their efforts.

Children deserve an unbiased, well-rounded education. One of the ways we can ensure that happens is to elect school boards that are comprised of a diverse, yet well-balanced group of individuals. The October issue of *Freedom Watch* will report the results of our school board candidate survey, outlining the platforms of candidates running in Districts 11, 20, 2, and 12. This upcoming publication will help Pikes Peak area residents learn about the beliefs and views of those individuals who will create educational policies relating to what young people in this community will learn in public school. Look for it in the *Independent* and at other locations throughout the city on October 14th. Citizens Project will also hold candidate forums in some of the districts. The forums offer a chance for the public to meet candidates, hear their views, and ask questions.

We hope you'll read our survey and attend our forums to help make an informed decision on election day.

Citizens Project

GLBT religious forum visits Springs to challenge tall tales

a commentary by Kevin Maly

The National Religious Leadership Roundtable (NRLR), organized by the National Gay and Lesbian Task force, chose to hold its most recent meeting in Colorado Springs for an obvious reason. "Colorado Springs" is synonymous with "Focus on the Family" and other groups who spend lots of time and energy telling tall tales about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) people. We came to Colorado Springs to tell another story about GLBT people.

The NRLR, in the words of its mission statement, is a story about religious leaders from "pro gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender faith, spiritual and religious organizations" coming together to "promote understanding and respect for GLBT people." The Roundtable's appearance in Colorado Springs was all about telling those who have ears to hear that GLBT people of faith are people of deep, enduring values, people who wish to build families and homes, people who have much to give for the betterment of our society. The participants of the NRLR come together to work with one another and other justice-seeking groups to achieve commonly held goals that promote equality, spirituality, and justice.

One of the goals of the NRLR is to promote understanding and respect for the variety of faith paths to which GLBT people and all humans are called. This is called religious pluralism, a concept promoted in the Constitution of the United States in the disestablishment clause of the First Amendment. This means that no one faith tradition can lay claim in the public realm to having the inside track on God. Participants in the NRLR want to make clear to Focus on the Family, Colorado for Family Values, and others who claim to know God's will with regard to who can love whom, that they will not be allowed to usurp the name of God, of faith, of spirituality for their own narrow ends. The gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and allied people who are a part of the Roundtable are people of faith, people of passionate and committed faith. We are Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Evangelical Christian, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Quaker, Disciples of Christ, Unitarian Universalists, Mormons, Hindu – and some that I've undoubtedly missed – who are disciplined in our love of God (however we perceive God to be) and in our love of neighbor, and who believe that we are deeply loved, treasured, and accepted by the deity.

When we gathered together in the Springs, GLBT and allied people of faith, it was clear both in "closed" sessions and in our public forum that our sexual orientation is about a whole lot more than sex acts. We were talking about love, about our innate, (some would say God-given) capacity to love. And we were asking anyone who would listen, "How can people of sacred worth be denied loving community? How can people of sacred worth be denied the experience of God's love as it is made known in human relationships, in human partnerships, in human marriage?" And as the display of The Stoles Project (a stole is a long, slender garment worn over the shoulders that is placed upon Christian clergy when they receive ordination) made clear, we were asking, "How can our experience of God's love, mediated through our partners, be incompatible with giving our lives to the service of God?" These were stoles of GLBT and allied people that represented GLBT people to whom the Church (in this case the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) has said, "No thanks. We don't want your sacred love or your passionate faith commitment."

"We are a gentle, angry people." We are people of faith who believe and who love along the various paths the deity has set before us.

We who came to Colorado Springs on the 23rd and 24th of August came to tell some of our stories and to challenge the tall tales told by some of the denizens of Colorado. As a Holly Near song says, "We are a gentle, angry people." We are people of faith who believe and who love along the various paths the deity has set before us. And we live in the United States of America, a pluralistic culture that, when true to its founding principles, finds consensus in the idea that liberty, equality, and justice are for all people, no exceptions. And anyone who says otherwise is telling tall tales.

Kevin R. Maly, M.Div., Ph.D. is Director of Voices of Faith for Human Rights, a program of Equality Colorado, and was a participant in the National Religious Leadership Roundtable. He was ordained in 1983 and has served in parish, campus ministry, and school settings.

Coronado High School students take an active role in elections

After completing nine to twelve years of public education, high school students are full of opinions about the public education system. Yet, rare are the school board candidates that seek out these "experts" for advice on making public schools stronger. That may change in District 11.

This year, Coronado High School students will be creating their own candidate survey. Students completed an open-ended survey asking them what could be done to improve their school. Student volunteers are compiling the responses to determine the top concerns. These will form the basis for questions that will be mailed to the District 11 school board candidates.

CP will distribute copies of the Coronado students' candidate survey at the District 11 candidate forum, October 19th, 7:00 PM, at Coronado High School. CP will work with student volunteers to ensure strong student participation in the forum. Following the candidate forum, students will have a chance to cast their vote in a straw poll to be conducted during school.

"The school board deals with issues that are for my future and present education, which are very important," notes Lauren Jordan, a junior at Coronado who has volunteered to publicize the forum within the school and to local media. With many high school students only a few years to a few months away from reaching legal voting age, this project offers a hands-on civics lesson that emphasizes connections between daily experience and voting.

Newsbriefs

Texas judge decrees Metropolitan Community Church not "main line"; AU cries foul

A Texas judge violated the First Amendment when he ruled that a divorced woman could not take her child to a predominantly gay Christian church because the congregation is not "main line," says Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a religious liberty watchdog group based in Washington, DC.

In a friend-of-the-court brief filed jointly with three other organizations, Americans United argues that "A court-imposed ranking of religions and determination as to which are sufficiently 'main line,' or orthodox, constitutes impermissible state assessment of ecclesiastical matters and partiality concerning religious denominations."

The case centers on a divorce involving a Christian mother and a Jewish father. In the decree, both parents agreed to provide religious training for their 5-year-old daughter. When the mother began taking her daughter to services at the MCC congregation in Wichita Falls, the father objected and asked Judge Nelson to intervene.

Nelson ruled that only "main line churches would be utilized by the parties for the religious training of the child...." The court listed a number of houses of worship that would qualify as "main line," including Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian, and Catholic congregations as well as Jewish synagogues but added "the Metropolitan Community Church does not fall within the category."

Maine to vote on gay rights in 2000

Maine voters may get the chance to provide broad civil rights protection to homosexuals in 2000.

In 1995 gay-rights advocates won a major victory by defeating an Amendment 2-like referendum that would have prevented local municipalities from passing gay-rights ordinances. Three years later the legislature passed a statewide law making discrimination based on sexual orientation in credit, employment, housing, and public accommodations illegal. However, a 1998 referendum on the 1995 law attracted 30 percent of Maine's voting population: 51 percent of the people voted to overturn the gay-rights law.

Maine's Lesbian/Gay Political alliance hopes for a stronger turnout by having the third referendum on gay rights in five years on an election year. Maine is known to have a 66 percent turnout on presidential election years. The new bill will reestablish civil rights protections outlined in the '95 law.

Pat Robertson lands Gold Deal with Liberian Dictator

Liberian President Charles Taylor and TV preacher Pat Robertson are now business partners. According to a

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Quote of Note

"You know, we have this so-called executive order that says it's illegal to assassinate some head of state. It's an executive order. A president signed it; a president can take it away. It wasn't put in by an act of Congress, it is not a treaty, it is not part of the Constitution. It was merely an executive order. And I know it sounds somewhat Machiavellian and evil, to think that you could send a squad in to take out somebody like Osama bin Laden, or to take out the head of North Korea. But isn't it better to do something like that, to take out Milosevic, to take out Saddam Hussein, rather than to spend billions and billions of dollars on a war that harms innocent civilians and destroys the infrastructure of a country? It would just seem so much more practical to have that flexibility ..."

Pat Robertson
advocating political assasinations
on his 700 Club TV show.

Citizens Project

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report published in *The Virginian Pilot*, Freedom Gold Ltd. has been allowed to mine for gold in the Bukon Jedeh region of Liberia. Robertson is listed as the president and sole director of Freedom Gold Ltd., a company allegedly formed offshore in the Cayman Islands last December.

Charles Taylor led Liberia's 1989 civil war in which half of Liberia's 3 million people were killed or displaced. International human rights observers have documented the appalling atrocities carried out during the war and continuing under Taylor's rule.

The deal will grant Liberia's government 10 percent equity in Robertson's company and requires ratification by the Liberian legislature. After an "exploration" period about 15 percent of Freedom Gold shares will be available to Liberian investors.

Robertson is no stranger in the African mining business. In the early nineties, another brutal dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, gave Robertson extensive diamond mining rights in Zaire (currently known as Congo). This enterprise ultimately led to a Virginia state investigation in which Robertson allegedly used humanitarian cargo planes to transport mining equipment for his operation.

Maine is known to have a 66 percent turnout on presidential election years.

Is Rush accusing Democrats of orchestrating Texas church shooting?

The Mojo Wire, online at www.motherjones.com, reported on Rush Limbaugh's speculation that Democrats staged the Texas church shooting in order to promote gun control legislation. Rush made the following comments during the September 16 edition of his radio show: "Voila! Automatically we've got another mass shooting. The minute Congress gets back and starts to work on new gun legislation ... guess what? I'm drawing no conclusion. I'm just telling you. It's very, very strange.

'Well, gee, Rush, it sounds very sinister.' It may be. Look. I don't doubt for a minute that Democrats are capable of staging any kind of event whatsoever in order to gain advantage in the causes they support. I've said it before. It's nothing new."

City zoning order restricts couple to one prayer meeting per month

On August 3, attorneys for the American Center for Law and Justice filed a lawsuit against the city of Denver, claiming the city zoning order in David and Diane Reiter's neighborhood to be unconstitutional. The couple held weekly prayer meetings in their home for eight to twelve women up until October 1998, when neighbors began complaining, The city filed a zoning order limiting the Reiters to one meeting per month.

Inside CP

Community Shares and CP need businesses large and small

Community Shares is a cooperative of almost 90 nonprofit organizations based in Colorado. Community Shares organizations are diverse in their focuses, which encompass building strong communities, safeguarding the environment, fostering cultural tolerance and understanding, and supporting families. CP is a Community Shares member. Community Shares member organizations raise funds through workplace-giving programs. Businesses that participate in Community Shares campaigns can be as small as a couple of employees, to a payroll of thousands. If you think your business would like to support a Community Shares campaign, give Greg a call at 520-9899.

Help CP deliver the goods

It takes a lot of work to get *Freedom Watch* out each month. CP relies on many volunteers to help mail and deliver copies. We are always looking to expand our pool of *Freedom Watch* volunteers. If you don't mind a bit of ink on your hands, call us for some fun volunteer opportunities.

Interested in civic volunteer opportunities?

In November and December, several city- and county-appointed positions will expire. The boards that have expiring terms include the El Paso County Board of Health, the El Paso County Community Corrections Board, the Pikes Peak Library District, and the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments Community Advisory Committee. In some cases the expiring terms are eligible for renewal. If you are interested in serving the larger community in an appointed position, CP can help. We keep an updated list of openings and application procedures. Feel free to call the office for more information, or contact the county directly.

We've moved!

Our new offices are located in the Independence Building 121 E. Pikes Peak Ave. suite 210. (The offices are handicapped accessible by entering the Mining Exchange Building from the alley running perpendicular to Pikes Peak Ave. Take the elevator to the second floor and follow the hall to the left; it connects to the Independence Building.)

You can make a difference
JOIN CITIZENS PROJECT

Your voice for tolerance in the Pikes Peak region.

Citizens Project ...

- Reports on news and views in *Freedom Watch*
- Organizes campaigns, workshops, and events
- Sponsors candidate surveys and forums
- Monitors and informs on legislative and other issues

... and more

❑ Yes, I'd like to join Citizens Project! Enclosed is my membership contribution of $25 or more.

❑ I'm already a member, but I'm ready to do more! Enclosed is my contribution of:

❑ $25 ❑ $50 ❑ $75 ❑ $120 ❑ Other: $_____

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Our Mission: Citizens Project is a grassroots organization in the Pikes Peak region dedicated to upholding the traditional American values of pluralism, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state.

Citizens Project

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